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ABSTRACT

Critical debates about black expressive culture and black cultural productions within television are examined as a means of exploring processes by which questions about the American racial order, and blackness itself, are constructed, reproduced, and challenged. The central thread of the argument is that commercial culture operates as both a site of and resource for black cultural politics. It is also argued that cultural matters are also about politics and power, and struggle and transformation. These points are introduced in chapter 1. Chapters 2 and 3 map various social, moral, and political claims on blackness in the 1980s (during Reagan's administration) and the political projects to which these claims were put. The social, institutional, and historical contexts in which representations of blackness in television have been framed and located are the focus of chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 5, and the remainder of the book, focusing on particular television series (e.g., Frank's Place, In Living Color), must be read in relation to the debates detailed in earlier chapters. Past and future representations of blacks on television are part of an ongoing dialogue within and across social locations and positions within and outside black communities. (Contains 304 references.) (SLD)

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